



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Virginia Employment Commission

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VIRGINIA EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION RELEASES UPDATED DATA ON UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS

- More than 12,000 Virginia claimants refuse to return to work -

RICHMOND – The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) announced today that more than 12,000 cases involving unemployment benefits claimants refusing to return to work are pending administrative review, and approximately 400,000 job vacancies are currently posted on the Virginia Workforce Connection website.

In the 13 weeks since March 15, VEC has received 849,486 initial claims for unemployment benefits, approved and issued payments to a record 75 percent of claimants and paid out more than \$4.2 billion to people who have lost wages during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the filing week ending June 13, the figure for seasonally unadjusted initial unemployment claims in Virginia was 27,186. The latest claims figure was a decrease of 2,045 claimants from the previous week.

For the most recent filing week, continued weeks claimed totaled 386,893, down 9,163 from the previous week but 367,430 higher than the 19,463 continued claims from the comparable week last year.

With all of Virginia in Phase 2 of reopening, business activity has continued to increase. As employers have resumed operations, many have attempted to recall furloughed or laid-off employees to work. While certain circumstances, such as health, childcare or other caregiver responsibilities, may warrant continued payments of unemployment benefits to a claimant who has refused to return to work, the payments will be paused pending the outcome of an administrative review.

(more)

During today's news conference, VEC staff reiterated:

- VEC is required to follow processes outlined in state and federal law and through guidance provided by executive agencies.
- Employees who are called back to work by their employer generally must go back to work.
- Under the law, an employer is not required to maintain an open position for an employee who refuses to return to work or who voluntarily quit.
- A person who receives overpayment of benefits will be required to pay these benefits back.

More than 79,000 cases are pending administrative review. Many of these cases involve circumstances where an applicant reported being out of work for a reason other than layoff or furlough, or an employer has disputed an applicant's reason for being out of work.

The Virginia Employment Commission oversees the state Unemployment Insurance program, as well as new federal unemployment benefits programs created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the new federal programs, as well as through executive action by Gov. Ralph Northam, eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits have expanded. Nevertheless, not all applicants qualify for payment.